



From the Editor . . .

Happy 30th birthday to *Occupational Health Southern Africa*



**Gill Nelson,
Editor-in-Chief**

Just over four years ago, near the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2020, *Occupational Health Southern Africa* published an issue dedicated to the history of occupational health (<https://www.occhealth.co.za/index.php?p=issue&i=331>). This was to coincide with the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) 7th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health, which was planned to take place the following month at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. A write-up of the history of *Occupational Health Southern Africa* was included in that issue.¹

Prof. Rajen Naidoo, the main organiser and host of the conference, made the wise decision to postpone the event until 2022, rather than hold it virtually. At that time, no-one knew that the Pandemic and associated South African lockdown would continue for two years. Although the National State of Disaster ended on 4 April 2022, the country's COVID-19 law was only repealed in June 2022, and the conference was further delayed. It was eventually held in November 2023 and was a resounding success.²

Not to be left out, *Occupational Health Southern Africa* presented a poster, detailing the history of the Journal just short of its 30th birthday. This year, the Journal is celebrating that milestone, having published its first issue at the beginning of 1995 (<https://www.occhealth.co.za/pdf/journal/vol1no1.pdf>) – a respectable 36 pages of news, informative articles, and research.

Fundamentally, over the years, the Journal has remained true to its vision as described by the first Editor, Chris van Selm, in his editorial of the first issue of 1995 (<https://www.occhealth.co.za/pdf/journal/vol1no1.pdf>), i.e. to provide readers with “*information and articles which are of interest and use to them*”. This vision has since expanded to, amongst other things, create a platform for emerging researchers to publish their work, update readers about legislative changes related to occupational health, and publish abstracts from conferences, where appropriate.

The efforts by the authors who have submitted articles, comments, opinions etc to this issue are acknowledged with appreciation. The future of the journal depends on us providing our readers with information and articles which are of interest and use to them. Once again, we emphasise that the combined efforts of SASOH and SASOM have achieved a remarkable breakthrough in supporting the recognition and changes in the vital roles that occupational health practitioners play in the services provided.

There is a range of contributions available to authors from short reports to original and review articles, to letters to the editor. Each edition will have a case-study section intended to be educational and of interest, as well as a personality profile about people who have made a contribution to occupational health. It is hoped that occupational health workers will use this journal to air their views, and initiate some lively discussion.

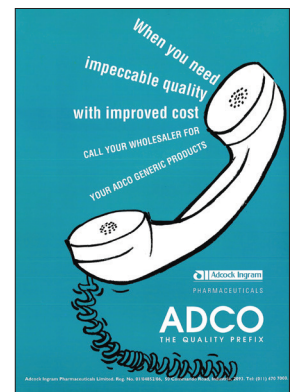
Excerpt from the editorial of Volume 1, Issue 1, 1995 of *Occupational Health Southern Africa* (Chris van Selm)

The “*personality profile about people who have made a contribution to occupational health*” that was envisaged from the genesis of the Journal, has continued, albeit sporadically. We have profiled Anja Franken, Pieter de Jager, Spo Kgalamono, Vanessa Govender, Muzimkhulu Zungu, Derk Brouwer, and others. In this issue, we profile Tumi Legobye, the Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA) President and Health and Wellness Executive at Harmony Mines. Please send us names of those persons you believe deserve to be featured in future issues.

Interestingly, some of those who published articles in the first issue are still active in occupational health research, including David Rees (Professor Emeritus, retired, and still an active researcher and regular contributor to the Journal), Renay Weiner (doctor, co-founder and Director of Research and Training for Health and Development), Mary Ross (Professor, retired; an Editorial Advisory Panel member of, and regular contributor to, *Occupational Health Southern Africa*), and Jill Murray (retired, and still an active researcher).

We have sadly lost occupational health colleagues along the way. REG Rendall published a case report on ‘Mesothelioma resulting from asbestos cement exposure’ in the 1st issue of the Journal, and later died from the disease. The first obituary was for Dr Gerard Sluis-Cremer, another prolific researcher of occupational diseases in the mining industry; in this issue, we write about two other noteworthy occupational health proponents who recently passed away– Schu Schutte and Tony Davies. Others who have passed away in the intervening years include Lee Baker, Anton Stoltz, Brenda Wortmann, Conrad Bosch, Neil White, Margot Becklake, Jock McCulloch, Danuta Kielkowski, Phiroshaw Camay, Brendan Girdler-Brown, Rosalie Lowe, Eric (Terry) Geddes, Sean Cheevers, Johan Mets, and Johann Beukes. Not all have been featured in *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, but all will be remembered for a long time for their contributions towards improving workers’ health.

For two and half decades, the Journal was published in print form and mailed to the many thousands of members of the contributing societies and subscribers, both within South Africa and across its borders. The Pandemic, however, changed the face of publishing and the Journal moved to an electronic platform, like many other scientific and non-scientific publications. This change both reduced costs and increased the reach of the journal. Something that has not changed is our reliance on advertising to build critical financial sustainability reserves. Advertising, too, has advanced with technology. Some other notable improvements over the years include recognition by the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2004, moving from a manual to an electronic submission and review system (Scholastica) in




Adcock Ingram advert from issue 1, 1995 – the first advertiser in OHSA

2018, development (2007) and upgrade (2022) of the website, and the introduction of the SASOM award for the best paper by a novice author in 2020. The winner of the SASOM Annual Author Award for 2023 will be announced in the next issue of the Journal.

For now, you can read three research papers in this issue about the difficulties that healthcare workers face, viz. the high prevalence of sharps injuries, factors associated with psychological resilience, and the consequences of performing repetitive tasks. In addition to other interesting news and articles, we celebrate Deon Jansen van Vuuren's well-deserved IOHA Lifetime Achievement Award, and recognise the importance and scope of the triennial ICOH2024 Congress that was held in Marrakesh, Morocco in April/May this year, and its Scientific Committees. South Africa was well represented in the congress.

We have just passed the winter solstice in the southern hemisphere, so can look forward to longer days. Keep warm – spring is only two months away!

REFERENCES

1. Nelson G. Commemorating 25 years of publishing research and information for OH practitioners. 2020; 26(2):84-89. Available from: https://www.occhealth.co.za/_assets/articles/331/2053.pdf (accessed 23 June 2024).
2. 7th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health, 15–17 November 2023, Durban, South Africa. 2023; 29(4):189-210. Available from: https://www.occhealth.co.za/_assets/articles/351/2460.pdf (accessed 23 June 2024). 



Front, L–R: Vanessa Govender, Thuthula Balfour, David Mamphita, Florence Magampa, Fatheela Brovko, Claudia Frost, Mary Ross, Goitsewang Keretsetse, Gill Nelson, Zodwa Ndlovu. Back, L–R: Daan Kocks and Dushendra Naidoo

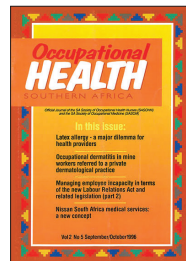
Occupational Health Southern Africa – a brief history

Gill Nelson¹ and Kevin Beaumont²

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- 1994** **Launch of Occupational Health Southern Africa**
The first issue of the only occupational health journal in the region is subsidised by the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) and the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN).
- 1998** **SAIOH joins**
OHASA (Occupational Hygiene Association of South Africa) and IOHSA (Institute of Occupational Hygienists of Southern Africa) merge to form SAIOH (Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene), which joins SASOM and SASOHN as partners on the journal.
- 2002** **MMPA joins**
The MMPA (Mine Medical Professionals Association) – previously the MMOA (The Mine Medical Officers' Association) – joins the journal as the 4th partner.
- 2004** **DHET accreditation**
The journal is officially accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).
- 2007** **Website launched**
- 2011** **Licensing agreement with Sabinet**
The journal is added to the Sabinet African Journals online journal platform. In 2012, African Index Medicus includes the journal in its online database.
- 2018** **Online editorial management system implemented**
The journal moves from a manual to an online review management system (Scholastica).
- 2019** **Editorial Advisory Panel is formed**
Complementing the Editorial Board, the panel comprises local and international occupational health experts.
- 2020** **Move from print to digital format**
- 2022** **Website overhauled**
- 2023** **Publishing frequency changes**
The journal changes from publishing bimonthly to quarterly issues. SASOHN leaves due to financial constraints.



Chris van Selm
Editor
1995-1998



Mike Baker
Editor
1998-2000



Fiona Robinson
Editor
2001-2005



Linda Grainger
Editor
2006-2012



Andrew Swanepoel
Assistant Editor
2013-2016



Gill Nelson
Editor-in-Chief
2013-present



Ntombizodwa Ndlovu
Assistant Editor
2016-present



Special issue 2009

Prior to 1994, the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) published a short newsletter for its members. Chris van Selm and Mike Baker proposed that the newsletter be developed into a journal.



Special issue 2009

Initially, the publication was in a hybrid 'journal-magazine' format. Over the years, it has developed into a respected scientific journal that is now published quarterly by a small team of two editors, a publisher, and a two-person production team.



Special issue 2020

The Editorial Board has always comprised representatives from the funding societies, and the publisher.



Special issue 2020

www.occhealth.co.za

Gill Nelson, Kevin Beaumont. Occupational Health Southern Africa – a brief history. Poster presented at the ICOH 7th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health, Durban, November 2023. The major milestones over the years are depicted, together with the Editors, since the Journal was launched in 1994